

**THE SLACKER'S FOOTBALL TEAM!** Adolphus Smythe & Co. find themselves up against it when Jimmy Silver commences his "No More Slacking" Campaign!

# The Slackers' Challenge!



A Rollicking Long Complete Story of Jimmy Silver & Co., the Chums of Rookwood.

By  
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(Author of the well-known Tales of Rookwood appearing in the "Boys' Friend" every week.)

## THE FIRST CHAPTER.

### Adolphus Takes a Hand!

**A**DOLPHUS SMYTHE of the Shell, came out of Carthew's study in the Sixth-Form passage at Rookwood, with a smile upon his face.

As a rule, juniors were not smiling when they came out of Carthew's study. Carthew of the Sixth was a bully, and quite an unpleasant person. But the expression on Smythe's face showed that he, at least, was quite satisfied with the result of his visit to that usually-avoided study.

He strolled along the corridor, still smiling; and smiled still more as he sighted Jimmy Silver & Co. near the big doorway.

It was Saturday afternoon, a half-holiday at Rookwood, and most of the juniors were thinking of football. But for once Jimmy Silver & Co. were evidently giving the great game a miss, for they were clad in Norfolds for a cycle spin. They were talking as Smythe came by.

"It's ten miles to Lanbury," Jimmy Silver was saying. "We can do it easily enough on the bikes, in time for the match. But we'd better get off at once."

"It's a jolly long ride to see a football match," remarked Raby.

"But it isn't quite an ordinary match," said Jimmy. "We want to see the Lanbury winger that we've heard so much about."

"Oh, we can do it all right!" said Arthur Edward Lovell. Arthur Edward caught sight of Smythe's smiling face in the offing, and called to the slacker of the Shell. "Hallo, Smythey! Like to join us in a ten-mile spin?"

The Fistical Four chuckled.

Adolphus Smythe was as likely to join in an expedition to the summit of Mount Everest as in a ten-mile bike ride.

"No, thanks," drawled Smythe. "You fellows goin' over to Lanbury this afternoon—what?"

"That's it!" said Jimmy.

"What about the footer?" asked Smythe. "You've been jolly par-

ticular about keepin' fellows up to practice lately, Silver. You've been rather stretchin' your giddy authority as junior captain. Now are you goin' to slack yourself?"

"You cheeky ass—" began Newcome.

"Twenty miles out and back on a bike isn't exactly slacking, Smythe," said Jimmy Silver.

"It isn't footer," said Smythe. "I really think Bulkeley ought to stop you fellows dodgin' football practice in this way."

And Adolphus Smythe walked off before Jimmy Silver & Co. could make any rejoinder.

"Why, I—I'll—" began Arthur Edward Lovell hotly.

Jimmy Silver laughed.

"All serene, old top!" he said. "Come along! No time to waste in ragging Smythey."

"Making out we're dodging footer practice, like himself!" exclaimed Lovell wrathfully.

"Never mind him—trot along!"

And Jimmy Silver slipped his arm through Lovell's, and led him out of the School House, followed by Raby and Newcome.

Adolphus Smythe sauntered into his study, where he found Tracy and Howard, of the Shell, and Townsend and Topham of the Fourth.

"Seen Carthew?" asked Tracy.

"Yaas!"

"Oh, good!"

"What's the game?" asked Townsend.

Smythe of the Shell indulged in a chortle.

"Just pullin' Silver's leg," he explained. "You know how the brute has been raggin' us over the footer practice. With Bulkeley of the Sixth backin' him up, he's been drivin' us down to the practice-ground in season and out of season, and makin' us buck up, as the beast calls it. I've got a dozen aches and pains all over me still. Now he's cuttin' the game himself, to bike over to Lanbury—"

"That's where we're goin' in the car?" said Topham.

"Exactly. Those bounders are bikin' it—or they think they are!—But I've put a spoke in their wheel," said Smythe complacently. "I've had a talk with Carthew of the Sixth. Carthew owes me some money, and he'll do anything for a chap who lends him money. And he's got a special down on that gang, too. Carthew's a prefect. He's got the power to look after juniors who try slackin' at games—"

"He doesn't generally worry himself much about that sort of thing," remarked Townsend.

"He's goin' to this afternoon. I've fixed it with him. Jimmy Silver & Co. are goin' to be stopped."

"My hat!"

"Rather turmin' the tables on the cads—what?" grinned Smythe. "They call us slackers! Well, they're goin' to be called slackers, and sent back to stick to the footer—by a prefect! See?"

There was a roar of merriment in Smythe's study.

Certainly, Adolphus was unusually brilliant this afternoon. He could not have thought of a more effective way of turning the tables on Jimmy Silver & Co.

"Sure Carthew will play up?" asked Topham.

"Quite. I've fixed it with him."

"Stick at the window here," continued Adolphus. "We shall see the merry scene from here. After the cads have been turned back, we'll get out to the car. I've ordered it to be waitin' outside the gates at two. It won't take us long to get over to Lanbury."

"But what's the special object in goin' to Lanbury?" asked Townsend. "I'm not keen on seein' a dashed footer match. We see enough of that at Rookwood, goodness knows!"

"I've got a special reason," said Smythe impressively. "I want to see the Lanbury winger."

"Bother the Lanbury winger!"

"Chap named Leech," said Smythe. "You've heard of him?"

"I've heard Silver and his set talkin' about the chap. I don't want to see him."

"But I do," said Adolphus, "and that's one reason why I want to keep that crowd away from Lanbury this afternoon. They've never seen Leech—and I don't want them to see him. I've got a little stunt on, and Jimmy Silver is goin' to get it in the neck, if all goes well. Look out! There they go!"

From the window of Smythe's study the Fistical Four could be seen wheeling their bicycles down to the gates. At the same time, Carthew of the Sixth came into view. And Adolphus Smythe and his knotty chums gathered at the window, in a grinning crowd, to watch the scene that followed.

### THE SECOND CHAPTER.

#### A Facer for Uncle James!

**S**TOP!" Carthew of the Sixth rapped out that word as the Fistical Four of the Fourth arrived at the school gates, wheeling their machines. Several other fellows of the Fourth were walking down to the gates with the Co.—Mornington, and Erroll, and Oswald, and Conroy, and two or three others. They were seeing Jimmy Silver & Co. off before they went to the footer.

"Hallo!" said Jimmy, as Carthew blocked the way. "What's up?"

"Where are you going?" asked the Sixth-Former.

"Out!" said Lovell, rather gruffly. "I can see you're going out," said Carthew tartly. "I want to know where and why."

"Certainly!" said Jimmy Silver amicably. "We're going to ride over to Lanbury, Carthew, to see the football match there."

"And what about football practice here?" demanded Carthew.

"We're giving it a miss this afternoon."

"You're doing nothing of the sort!" said Carthew deliberately. "As junior captain, Silver, you ought to be ashamed of yourself, setting an example of slacking to the other juniors!"

"What?" ejaculated Jimmy. Some of the Fourth-Formers grinned. Slacking was the very last accusation that could justly be brought against the Fistical Four of the Fourth, as Carthew very well knew. If anything, they erred on the side of strenuous energy. And the expression on Jimmy's face at that moment was, as Morny remarked afterwards, well worth watching.

Carthew raised his hand. "Take those bikes in, and get to the footer at once," he said. "I'm surprised at you, Silver! Bulkeley's given you instructions to see that the juniors turn up to regular practice; and I find you sneaking out and cutting the practice yourself!"

"We're not sneaking out!" roared Lovell. "We've a right to ride to Lanbury on a half-holiday if we want to!"

"Not to dodge footer practice!"

"We're not dodging!"

"Looks to me like it," said Carthew, with a sour grin. "Anyhow, I'm here to see that you don't do it!"

"Look here, Carthew," said Jimmy Silver, as quietly as he could. "We want specially to go over to Lanbury this afternoon. Lanbury Ramblers are playing at home, and—"

"That will do—"

"We want to see Leech, the Lanbury winger—"

"I've told you that will do, Silver. Take those bikes in, and get along to footer practice!"

The Fistical Four stood still, with feelings almost too deep for words. They wanted to go to Lanbury; but the accusation of slacking was the unkindest cut of all.

It was rather a difficult position. Carthew, as a prefect, had the right to stop them if he considered it judicious to do so—and evidently he did. But the Fistical Four were very well aware that it was not a rigid sense of duty that moved Carthew.

"Better chuck it and come to the footer!" murmured Oswald.

Jimmy set his lips.

"We're going to Lanbury," he said. "You're not," said Carthew coolly.

"Here's old Bulkeley!" muttered Mornington.

Bulkeley of the Sixth, captain of Rookwood, was in the quad, and the altercation had drawn him to the spot. Jimmy Silver was glad to see him come. "Old Bulkeley" could always be relied upon to see fair play.

"I say, Bulkeley—" began Lovell.

"Well, what's the trouble?" asked the captain of Rookwood good-humouredly.

"That rotter—" "What?"

"I—I mean Carthew—" stammered Lovell.

"That isn't the way to speak of a prefect, Lovell!"

"I—I mean—" "These juniors were sneaking out of gates to dodge footer practice," said Carthew blandly. "I've stopped them."

"Really, Silver—" began Bulkeley.

"You know we're not slackers, Bulkeley!" exclaimed Jimmy Silver. "We want specially to see a match at Lanbury—"

"Your place just at present is on the footer ground," sneered Carthew. "There must be a stop put to this slacking!"

"It's a lie!" roared Lovell. "You know you don't think anything of the sort, Carthew!"

"Take fifty lines for cheeking a prefect, Lovell!" said Bulkeley sharply.

"And all of you wheel your bikes in, and go to the footer at once!"

"Oh, I say, Bulkeley—" "You've heard what I said?"

The captain of the school walked away, leaving Carthew grinning, and the Fistical Four looking dismayed and angry.

Very slowly indeed Jimmy Silver & Co. jerked their bikes round and wheeled them away to the bike-shed.

Bulkeley was captain of the school, and Head of the Games, and his word was law.

"Hard cheese, old beans!" said Mornington sympathetically, as the Fistical Four went.

They did not reply; they were too angry for words. In silence they wheeled their machines away.

Carthew strolled back to the School House smiling. For once he had triumphed over his old enemies in the Fourth.

He enjoyed his little triumph; but not so much as Smythe & Co., who had watched the scene across the quad from the study window. Smythe & Co. were chortling with glee.

"Rather a facer for the great Uncle James!" chuckled Adolphus. "Now the show's over we may as well get out!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

And the knuts of Rookwood left quietly by the side gate, what time Jimmy Silver & Co., having changed for footer, were going down to Little Side to play football—not in their usual keen and joyous mood.

### THE THIRD CHAPTER.

#### Adolphus Little Scheme!

**T**HERE was a big crowd at the Lanbury football-ground. The Lanbury Ramblers were always worth watching; and Leech,

their new outside-right, was a player head and shoulders above the rest of the Lanbury team. Adolphus Smythe & Co. arrived in their car, and secured seats in the grand-stand, and settled down comfortably. The stand was crowded, and most of the spectators were talking about Teddy Leech. The knuts of Rookwood heard the winger referred to on all sides as Teddy, and Leech, and Leechey, and the Little Wonder, and Little Leech, and Tiny Teddy, and various other affectionate names. Evidently the Lanbury folk thought a great deal of the new winger.

Smythe & Co. cared about as much for football as they cared for mathematics or relativity. But undoubtedly they were interested in Teddy Leech—

for mysterious reasons of their own.

Of late the slackers of Rookwood had been forced to take some interest in the great winter game. Bulkeley of the Sixth had put his foot down; and Jimmy Silver, as junior captain, had been given the task of rounding up the slackers in the Lower School. Adolphus & Co. had assuredly improved their play, and improved their physical fitness. But they had done it against the grain, and rebelliously. They preferred a smoke and a game of nap in the study to the strenuous life on the football-ground. And their preferences in this respect had been ruthlessly disregarded.

The Ramblers were playing a visiting team from Bunbury, and there was a cheer when the players came on to the field. From a hundred Lanbury throats came a yell of greeting:

"Good old Leechey!"

"That's Leech!" remarked Adolphus Smythe, pointing to a diminutive player in the red shirt of the Ramblers.

His companions looked curiously at the winger.

They found him rather disappointing to look at, after all they had heard about him and his prowess.

Teddy Leech was a decidedly diminutive man. He was probably about nineteen years old; but he was not so tall as Adolphus Smythe himself, and he was slimly built. Among the more hefty footballers he looked like a slip of a boy. Certainly he did not look as if he could stand up for a moment against a charge; and he certainly looked as if he could be shouldered out of the way like a feather-weight.

"Don't think much of him!" grunted Tracy.

"Well, he's not much to look at," admitted Smythe. "But there's no gettin' away from the fact that he's won matches for the Ramblers."

"Looks a mere kid," said Townsend.

"Why, there's fellows in the Fourth at Rookwood bigger than he is!"

"That's what put me on to this stunt!" said Adolphus.

"You've been talkin' a lot about a stunt," said Topham. "Blessed if I know what you're gettin' at! You've landed us here for an hour and a half to be bored stiff, I know that!"

"Oh, the game's well worth watchin'!"

"Bother the game! We might have had an afternoon at the Bird-in-Hand!" said Topham.

"I tell you I've got a rippin' stunt!" said Smythe in a low voice. "If that chap lives up to his giddy reputation it will be all right. I want to see him play first, and make sure, that's all. I'm not buyin' a pig in a pöke!"

"Blessed if I catch on!" yawned Townsend.

"Wait an' see!" answered Smythe. "Watch Leech; he's on the ball already."

There was no doubt that Lanbury's inside-right was worth watching.

From the start he was "on the ball," and in the first few minutes of the game he gave an exhibition of his quality.

His turn of speed was amazing; his kicking was unerring; his passing was perfect. He was as nimble on his feet as a cat, and he seemed to have eyes in the back of his head. More than once a burly Bunbury man sought to run him down, and Teddy Leech certainly hadn't the weight to stand up to it; but he seemed to wind round his opponents; and if he was shouldered over he was up again like an india-rubber ball.

The first goal came to the Ramblers, the centre-forward scoring from a beautiful pass given by Leech at the right second. The second goal came to Leech himself, and he took it single-handed, beating halves and backs all on his own.

There was a roar of cheering from the delighted Lanbury crowd.

Smythe grinned.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Goal! Bravo!"

"What rot!" yawned Townsend.

Towny was a superb youth, who declined to be enthusiastic on any subject, least of all upon football. Even upon the more enthralling subjects of ties and trousers he was moderate in his enthusiasm. So he was not likely to let himself go on footer.

But Adolphus Smythe, for once, was quite keen. He actually went to the length of clapping—a muscular exertion that, as a rule, was not in his line at all.

At half-time the Ramblers were two to nil, and the Lanbury crowd were in high good-humour.

"Can't we chuck it now?" asked Townsend plaintively.

Smythe considered, and then nodded.

"Yaas, we've seen enough," he admitted. "Let's get out."

And the Rookwood knuts wormed their way out of the crowded stand, without waiting for the second half. Smythe was highly satisfied with what he had seen, though the cause of his satisfaction was still a mystery to Towny and Toppo.

"Thank goodness, we're out of that!" grunted Townsend. "Let's get back to Rookwood."

"Not yet," said Smythe.

"Why the thump not?"

"Because I've got to see Leech after the game. We'll have a run in the car, and get back here by the time they finish."

"Oh, all right!"

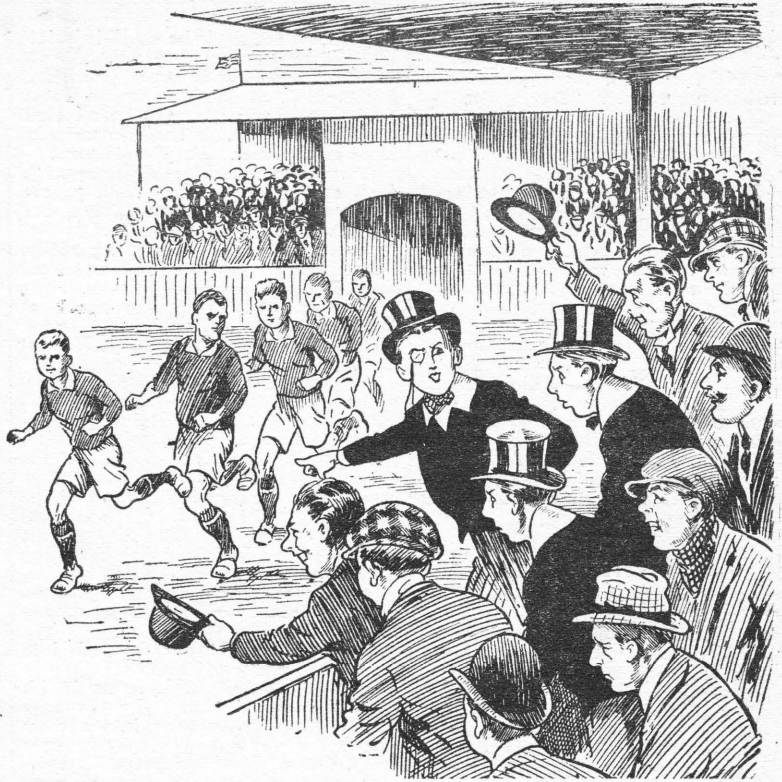
In the car, gliding along the lanes round about Lanbury, Adolphus Smythe condescended to explain at last.

"I've got it in for Jimmy Silver!" he said. "You know how the beast has been workin' us at footer lately—callin' us slackers, routin' us out of the study, and makin' life a burden generally. Well, I'm goin' to make him sit up. Our view has always been that we could play footer if we cared to, but that it wasn't worth our while."

"Well, we've said so!" murmured Towny.

"Now we've got to stick it, whether we like it or not. And, as a merry punishment, I'm goin' to challenge Jimmy Silver's eleven to a football match, and walk all over them!"

Towny and Toppo fairly jumped.



**AT THE LANBURY MATCH!** There was a cheer as the Ramblers came on to the field. From a hundred Lanbury throats came a yell of greeting: "Good old Leechy!" "That's Leech!" remarked Adolphus Smythe, pointing to a diminutive figure in the red shirt of the Ramblers. (See Chapter 3.)

"You're goin' to raise a team to play the Rookwood junior eleven?" exclaimed Townsend.

"Yaas."

"My only hat! They'll walk over us!"

"They won't!" said Smythe serenely. "I've figured it all out. We shall have one player in the ranks that will be a match for all the Rookwood junior eleven put together."

"Eh? Who's that?"

"Teddy Leech!"

"Teddy Leech?" repeated Townsend dazedly.

"That's the stunt," said Adolphus calmly. "I'm baggin' Teddy Leech for our team."

"Ye gods!"

"Under the rose, of course," explained Smythe of the Shell. "Jimmy Silver won't know anythin' about it. He's never seen Leech, and won't know him from Adam. I shall simply mention that if I can't raise eleven men among my friends, I may ask a lad I know from the neighbourhood. Silver can't say anything against that, can he? He certainly isn't likely to suspect that I'm baggin' the Lanbury winger."

"Ha, ha! I should say not."

"Leech doesn't look much more than sixteen; he will pass all right. We shall have bigger fellows in the team. I'm bigger myself, and so's Howard and Selwyn and Chesney. Silver will take him for a village lad, and won't think anythin' more of it. He may be rather surprised when he sees him playin'." Smythe chuckled. "But after agreein', he can't do anythin'. We shall keep it very dark about the chap bein' Leech of Lanbury. We'll give him another name for the occasion. And we'll jolly well

pile up goals, and give Jimmy Silver & Co. the merry kybosh at their own merry game of footer! How's that for a stunt?"

And Adolphus smiled complacently.

Smythe's chums looked at him in great admiration.

Certainly it was a very clever scheme; and certainly, if it came off successfully, Jimmy Silver & Co.'s colours would be lowered, without the shadow of a doubt, on the football ground at Rookwood.

And the defeat of Jimmy Silver & Co. at their own game by the slackers they had been rounding up would be the bitterest of pills for the end study to swallow.

"He simply can't suspect the trick," said Smythe. "It's as easy as fallin' off a form. Your Uncle Adolphus is a big chief, my infants."

"What a stunt!" gasped Townsend. "Why, it's the catch of the term! But—but can you fix it up with Leech?"

"I fancy so. I shall spin him a bit of a yarn, and stand him his exes for the day and a quid over. No reason why he shouldn't take it on. He can't get much out of playing for the Ramblers; they're a poor little club. He will be bagged some day—soon perhaps—by a big League team; but that hasn't happened yet. We shall have to fix it for a Wednesday; the Ramblers can't spare him Saturdays. I've no doubt that he will jump at the offer; no reason why he shouldn't."

"But he mightn't like playing a trick—"

"He won't know there's any trick. I shall simply tell him I want an extra man for my eleven, and ask him his terms to take it on."

"Well, that's all right. I suppose he's open to earn money, and he could get

permission from his people easily enough."

"It's the catch of the season!" said Smythe impressively. "I've got a rod in pickle for Uncle James of Rookwood, I can tell you. They're goin' to be walked over at footer, and they'll have to hide their giddy diminished heads. Leave it to me, my infants. We're goin' to beat that gaug at footer, hands down; and ever after we shall rest upon our laurels, and refuse to play them again. We shall say that we can't waste our time playin' a team so far below our weight."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Now we'd better be gettin' back to Lanbury," yawned the great Adolphus. "I must see Leech this afternoon, and fix it with him."

And the car glided back to Lanbury Football Ground, with the happy knuts grinning in it. In the opinion of his knutty comrades, Adolphus Smythe of the Shell most undoubtedly was a "big chief."

#### THE FOURTH CHAPTER.

##### Rough Justice!

"SLACKERS!"

Tubby Muffin grinned in at the doorway of the end study in the Fourth as he made that unpleasant remark.

Jimmy Silver & Co. glared at him.

They had come in to tea after footer not in their usually cheery mood. They were annoyed at having missed seeing the Lanbury match, and they were very sore indeed about Carthew's intervention.

They were, in fact, far from being in a mood to be chipped by Tubby Muffin, and the fat junior was treading on dangerous ground.

"Fancy being called to order for slacking—this study, too!" chuckled Tubby Muffin. "I'm shocked at you, Jimmy! He, he, he!"

"Shut up!" roared Lovell. "And get out!"

"I came to tell you fellows something," said Tubby, rolling in, instead of out. "Smythe's done you this time!"

"What the thump has Smythe to do with it?" growled Jimmy Silver.

"He fixed it up with Carthew."

"What?"

"He, he, he! I heard Peele telling Gower—and Smythe told Peele," said Tubby, grinning. "Smythe wangled it to get Carthew to drop on you! He, he, he!"

The Fistical Four exchanged glances. "Might have guessed that!" growled Lovell. "Carthew's never troubled his head about the thing before. I'll jolly well punch Smythe. Just one of his low-down tricks!"

Jimmy Silver nodded.

"Because we've been making him turn up to practice," he said. "I suppose it's his idea of turning the tables on us. Know where Smythe is now, Tubby? You generally know everything."

"I fancy I see most of what goes on," said Tubby Muffin complacently. "Smythe came back half an hour ago, and he's having tea now in his study."

"They missed footer," said Raby. "Carthew didn't worry about keeping a fatherly eye on them—bless him!"

"Out of gates pub-hunting, most likely," grunted Newcome.

"Wrong!" said Tubby Muffin.

"They've been over to Lanbury to see the match there—the one you fellows missed. He, he, he!"

"What rot!" said Lovell gruffly. "Smythe wouldn't go a dozen yards to

see a footer match, if he could help it!" "Well, that's what they did. I heard them talking about it as they came in," said Muffin, "and Smythe said to Townsend that it was going to be all right about the winger. I don't know what he meant by that. Do you, Jimmy?"

"Blessed if I do!" said Jimmy. "I don't care much, either! We'll go and see Smythe after tea, you fellows, and tell him what we think of him!"

"Hear, hear!" said the Co, genially. And after tea the Fistical Four strolled along the Shell passage.

They did not trouble to knock at Adolphus' door. Arthur Edward Lovell opened it by the simple process of jamming his heavy boot against it.

The door flew open with a crash. "Oh gad!" ejaculated Smythe.

Adolphus & Co. were still at tea—quite a numerous party. Smythe and Howard and Tracy and Selwyn of the Shell were there, and Townsend, Topham, Peele, Gower, and Lattrey of the Fourth. The slackers of Rookwood seemed to be in unusually high spirits, for they were laughing and chuckling as the door flew open.

Apparently there was some joke on—of what nature Jimmy Silver did not trouble to guess.

The captain of the Fourth strode into the study, with a grim brow.

Smythe adjusted his eyeglass in his eye and stared at him.

"Did they always come into a room like that in the slum you were brought up in, Silver?" he inquired politely.

"I've come here to talk to you, Smythe!" said Jimmy Silver abruptly. "It was you who put Carthew up to dropping on us this afternoon!"

Smythe started.

He gave a glare round the table, evidently under the impression that some of his knutty associates had been talking too freely. The joke had been a great one, in Smythe's estimation, but it was not a joke that could be safely confided to the victims.

"What silly ass told you?" growled Smythe.

"Better go and talk to Carthew about it," said Tracy uneasily. "No good comin' here raggin', Silver!"

Jimmy shook his head.

"Talking to a prefect of the Sixth isn't much good," he said. "We can't handle Carthew without a row with the Head. But we can handle you, Smythe!"

"Look here—"

"I suppose you've been lending your dashed money to Carthew, or he wouldn't play your game like this!" said Jimmy contemptuously.

"Better let Carthew hear you say so!" sneered Peele.

Jimmy ignored Peele. His business there was with Adolphus Smythe.

"You've done us!" he continued. "You got us kept within gates when we specially wanted to see the Lanbury winger, and you sneaked out yourself and dodged footer practice. Where will you have it, Smithey?"

Adolphus jumped up.

"Look here, you dashed ruffian! Hands off!" roared Adolphus. "Back up, you fellows! Yaroooooh!"

Bump!

Adolphus was in the hands of the Philistines.

His knutty comrades jumped up; but,

numerous as they were, they did not seem in a hurry to tackle the Fistical Four. Perhaps they feared that their elegant clobber might get damaged in a combat with those hard-hitting youths. Undoubtedly there would have been considerable damage.

Smythe sprawled on the floor in the grasp of Raby and Newcome, yelling. Jimmy Silver picked the jam-pot from the tea-table.

Arthur Edward Lovell stood between his comrades and the knuts, with his fists up. But his fists were not needed. The knuts looked on savagely, but silently.

"Help!" yelled Adolphus.

Squash!

A torrent of jam descended upon Smythe's classic features, and Jimmy Silver rubbed it in with Smythe's own necktie, jerked out for the purpose.

Smythe wriggled and roared.

"Groogh! You horrid beast! Leggo! Lemme up! Yooooo! Ooooooh!"

"Now give him the marmalade!" chirruped Newcome.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Ooooooooh!" gurgled Adolphus. "Help! Back up! Oh gad! Yow-ow-ow!"

The marmalade, added to the jam, made Adolphus decidedly sticky. He squirmed under the horrid infliction. As the chums of the Fourth released him he sat up and spluttered.

"Ooooooooh!"

"Here endeth the first lesson!" chuckled Lovell. "Do you feel properly sorry for yourself, Smithey?"

"Ooooooooh!"

"Will you spring Carthew on us again?"

"Ooooooooh!"

"I don't understand German, Smythe! Answer in English, or you'll get the butter, too!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"Yoooooh!" spluttered Adolphus. "I—I—I'll—I—I mean, I won't—certainly not! Oh dear! Never—Grooogh!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Jimmy Silver & Co. strolled out of the study, smiling. Adolphus clutched a handkerchief and mopped his face. He staggered to his feet, very jammy and marmalady, and glared ferociously at his chums.

"Why didn't you back up and help a chap?" he bellowed.

"We—we were just goin' to!" stammered Tracy.

"We—we—Ahem—"

"You—you see—"

"Groogh! You set of slackin' funks!" bawled Adolphus.

And he rushed out of the study, heading for the nearest bath-room. The merry tea-party in Smythe's study broke up rather suddenly. For some time Adolphus was busy with hot water and soap, and jam and marmalade; and his knutty pals felt that when he returned, newly swept and garnished, he would not be in a hospitable mood. So, like the gentlemen in the play, they stood not upon the order of their going, but went at once.

#### THE FIFTH CHAPTER.

##### Caught Napping!

"WHAT the thump—" "Another little joke of Smythe's, I suppose," said Jimmy Silver, with a puzzled brow.

A number of juniors were gathered round the notice-board on the following day. There was a new paper on the board, and it was written in the

**ANSWERS**  
Every Saturday PRICE 2:

elegant calligraphy of Adolphus Smythe of the Shell.

It was rather a surprising notice. It ran:

"NOTICE.—Smythe's Eleven is open to meet any football team in the Lower School. Any Wednesday this month. For further particulars apply Study No. 5 in the Shell.

"(Signed) Adolphus Smythe."

"Must be trying to pull our leg!" opined Arthur Edward Lovell. "Why, Smythe and his pals wouldn't turn up to footer at all if they weren't kicked into it! I'd like to see that gang of slackers meet us on the footer-field! They wouldn't get over it for ten years at least!"

"Ten decades, more likely!" grinned Mornington. "It must be some sort of a joke. I don't see the point myself."

"Well, if Smythe's taking up football seriously, I'm jolly glad to hear it," said Jimmy Silver tolerantly. "It will do him good—may make him rather less of a howling idiot. But this silly challenge is too thick. I've a jolly good mind to accept it for the junior eleven, and hold them to it and make 'em play!"

"There'd be nearly a dozen funerals afterwards!" chuckled Lovell.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

Tracy of the Shell strolled along, and stopped as he saw the crowd round the board. Lovell called to him.

"What does this mean, Tracy? Has your pal gone off his rocker?"

"It means what it says, I think," drawled Tracy. "Smythe's been making up an eleven to take the shine out of your crowd. I'm in it."

"Must be a ripping eleven with you in it!" said Lovell, with a scornful snort. "It would take the shine out of anything—I don't think!"

"We're open to play your lot!" said Tracy. "In fact, if you don't play us we shall consider that you're dodging a lickin'!"

"Dodging a licking—from you and Smythe!" gasped Lovell.

"That's it!"

Tracy walked on, with his nose in the air. The crowd of Fourth-Formers looked at one another.

"Blessed if I catch on to this!" said Jimmy Silver. "But if Smythe's crowd are willing to meet us at footer, they sha'n't say we dodged it! We'll play them, and make them tired of life! I think I'll hike along and see Smythe!"

Jimmy Silver made his way to Smythe's study, with nearly a dozen fellows at his heels—all keen to hear what Smythe's remarkable challenge really meant.

Adolphus Smythe was lounging elegantly in his armchair when the juniors came in.

"Off your rocker, Smythe?" was Lovell's first question.

"Oh, you're referin' to my little notice?" yawned Adolphus. "Do you fellows accept? I'd like to show you a bit about football. The knowledge would be useful to you—if you've got the grit to face it!"

"Grit!" repeated Jimmy Silver. "It doesn't need much grit, I should fancy! Who's in the precious eleven?"

"Tracy, Howard, Towny, Toppy, Peele, Gower, Lattrey, Chesney, Selwyn, self, and another chap," said Adolphus. "I haven't decided on eleventh man yet. In fact, I'm a man short. But I'll pick up a player somewhere, if you've got the pluck to stand up to us in a match."

"Done!" said Jimmy Silver instantly. "Yes, rather!" growled Lovell.

"We'll play you any Wednesday you like, and help to carry you home afterwards!"

"Wait an' see," answered Adolphus calmly. "We're ready to take it on. I rather fancy we shall walk all over you."

"Oh, my hat!"

"There's one point, though," added Adolphus, as if by way of afterthought. "This is rather a new thing, my raisin' an eleven to play the junior team. I shall have to fill out the eleven the best I can. If I can't find the eleventh man among my friends in the Fourth and the Shell, I suppose you don't mind if I play a friend visiting me here?"

"Not at all! Why should we?"

"That's all right, then. I'm expectin' a chap to come and see me one half-holiday, and if you fix up the match for next Wednesday I can ask him to come that day. He's rather a good footballer, I believe—almost as good as I am."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

"If he's almost as good as you, he must be a regular scorcher!" said Jimmy Silver sarcastically. "Play him, by all means, if you can't find a Rookwood chap who'd be willing to be found dead in your eleven! You seem to have gathered up all the slackers already! Next Wednesday?"

"Yaas."

"Mind, if we take up the challenge we shall hold you to it," said Jimmy Silver. "We're not being fooled. You've got to play."

"We're keen to, dear boy!"

"Done, then!"

"Don't forget to make your will!" added Arthur, Edward Lovell, as he followed Jimmy Silver out of the study.

Adolphus smiled serenely.

There was much surprise and much discussion in the Lower School of Rookwood on the subject of that amazing fixture. But certainly no one—outside Adolphus' own select circle—guessed what a rod was in pickle for Jimmy Silver & Co., or dreamed that when the slackers' match came off the Rookwood eleven would be "up against" the Lanbury winger. That was Smythe's own little secret, and it looked as if "Uncle James of Rookwood," keen as he was, would be caught napping for once.

(You must not miss reading—"Out To Win!" by Owen Conquest, next Tuesday's splendid long complete tale of Jimmy Silver & Co., of Rookwood, featuring the slackers of the Lower School and their amazing football challenge.)

## BUFFALO BILL, OUTLAW!

(Continued from page 6.)

"I'm sure coming," was the reply.

"But—Buffalo—" Tom Clark began.

"I know, son," said Cody. "You look that running away will make things look black against me. Mebbe it will, but they can't look blacker'n they are. I sure haven't got any proof, hev I? Davis and you, Tom, can only swear you saw the stuff done up, and Davis must swear he put it in the mail bag. All right, all right. I've been thinkin' about things, and, Tom, I remembered that letter Kansas King sent me. You know—about getting me just where I won't like it. I—"

"Go!" exclaimed Tom Clark. "You think—"

"I think there's a plot against me," was the reply, "and that it's really Kansas King who's at the back of it. I haven't got a leg to stand on at any trial, but I'll have two legs to stand on, and a horse to ride on if I get away—and away—well, believe me, it's for Kansas King I'll search until I find him and ram that letter down his throat."

And they made for the door, just as there came sounds of rifles and revolvers being fired.

"Listen, Tom," said Buffalo Bill quickly, clapping a hand on the boy's shoulder. "I'm going to make for Snake Creek. Meet me there. But first—find out what you can about this man Morley."

And they sallied from the building, to spring upon their horses; and to find that the magistrate's posse was standing covering Wild Bill's men.

(There will be another thrilling long instalment next week.)

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